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THE ADVENTURES OF MR. PETER RUFF

By E. Phillips Oppenheim-Delilah from Streatham.

(Copywright, 1969, by the Pearson Publishing Co.)

(Continued from yesterday)

"It was Mr. Spencer Fitzgerald," he said, "a clerk in Howell & Wilson's book-shop, who leapt out of the window of Daisy Villa two years ago. It may be Mr. James Fitzgerald now. Gentlemen of your profession have a knack of changing their names."

anyway!" the little man exclaimed. "We aren't all fools in it! My friend Mr. Peter Ruff said to me that there was a young lady whom I used to know who was anxious to meet me again, and would I step round here about eight o'clock. Here I am, and all I can say is, if that's the young lady, I never saw her before in my life."

There was a moment's breathless silence. Then the door was softly opened. Violet Brown went staggering back like a woman who sees a ghost. She bit her lips till the blood came. It was Peter Ruff who stood looking in upon them-Peter Ruff carefully dressed in evening clothes, his silk hat at exactly the correct angle, his coat and white kid gloves upon his

" Dear me," he said, " you don't seem to be getting on very well! Mr. Dory," he added, with a note of surprise in his tone, "this is indeed an unexpected pleasure! "

The man who stood by the desk turned to him. The others were stricken dumb.

Look here," he said, "there's some mistake. You told me to come here at eight o'clock to meet a young lady whom I used to know. Well, I never saw her before in my life," he added, pointing to Maud. "There's a man there who wants to arrest me-Lord knows what for! And here's Miss Brown, whom I have seen at the theater several times, but who never condescended to speak to me before, telling me not to shoot! What's it all about, Ruff? Is it a practical joke?"

hat, and sat upon the table with his "Is it possible," he said, "that I have made a mistake? Isn't your sec-

Peter Ruff laid down his coat and

ond name Spencer?' The man shook his head.

"My name is James Fitzgerald," he said. "I haven't missed a day at the Shaftesbury Theater for three years, as you can find out by going round the corner. I never called myself Spencer, was never in a book-shop, and I never saw that lady before in my life."

Maud came out from her place against the wall, and leaned eagerly forward. John Dory turned his head slowly towards his wife. A sickening fear had risen in his heart-gripped him by the throat. Fooled once more,

and by Peter Ruff! "It isn't Spencer!" Maud said huskily. "Mr. Ruff," she added, turning to him, "you know very well that this is not the Mr. Spencer Fitzgerald whom you promised to bring here tonight-Mr. Spencer Fitzgerald to whom was once engaged."

Peter Ruff pointed to the figure of her husband.

"Madam," he said, "my invitation did not include your husband."

John Dory took a step forward, and laid his hands upon the shoulders of the man who called himself Mr. James Fitzgerald. He looked into his face long and carefully. Then he turned away, and, gripping his wife by the arm, he passed out of the room. The door slammed behind him. The sound of heavy footsteps were heard descending to the floor below.

Violet Brown crossed the room to where Peter Ruff was still sitting with a queer look upon his face, and, gripping him by the shoulders, shook him. "How dare you!" she exclaimed. How dare you! Do you know that I

have nearly cried my eyes out?" Peter Ruff came back from the world into which, for the moment, his thoughts had taken him.

"Violet," he said, "you have known me for some years. You have been my secretary for some months. If you choose still to take me for a fool, I cannot help it."

"But," she exclaimed, pointing to Mr. James Fitzgerald-Peter Ruff nodded.

"I have been practising on him for some time," he said, with an air of self-satisfaction. " A thin, mobile face, you see, and plenty of experience in the art of making up. It is astonishing what one can do if one tries." Mr. James Fitzgerald picked up his

hat and coat. "I was worth more than five quid," he growled; "when I saw the handcuffs in that fellow's hand, I felt a

cold shiver go down my spine." Peter Ruff counted out two banknotes and passed them to his confed-

"You have earned the money," he ald. "Go and spend it. Perhaps, Violet," he added, turning towards her, "I have been a little inconsiderate. Come and have dinner with me, and forget it."

She drew a little sigh. "You are sure," she murmured, "that you wouldn't rather take Maud?"

THERE ARE MANY DEMANDS ON ROOSEVELT'S TIME

velt during his coming brief visit to feetly prepares the system for the the city. There was a meeting yes- coming of baby. Mother's Friend terday of James C. Goodwin, Cap- assures a quick and natural recovery thin Alexander, Colonel McClintock for every woman who uses it. It is and Lieutenant Wilcox in relation to for sale at drug stores. Write for the reception of the colonel here, and free book for expectant mothers. it was resolved to ask him to a luncheon to be given by the Rough Riders on the afternoon of his return rom the ceremonies at the Roosevelt The invitation will be extended by Captain Alexander.

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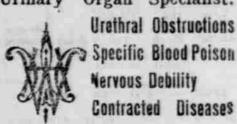
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